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175 563 565 369 [463] planters and expressing their contempt for the townspeople, speaks of the towns as existing primarily to serve the needs of these country squires as centers for the storage and disposal of their produce: "There are found merchants, artisans, judges, recorders, solicitors, notaries, bailiffs, doctors. But one finds neither nobles, men of property, nor persons of wit and perception." [16]

175 364 563 The physical aspect of the cities had little to recommend them, especially since the utter lack of sanitation made for extreme uncleanliness in all Haitian centers. This fact is of special interest in the light of the frequent references to this trait of Haitian cities in the writings of those Europeans who described the life of independent Haiti. Invariably in such accounts the littered state of the streets, even in the capital, is stressed, and tendered as evidence of the absence of civilization in this Negro Republic.[17] Even though occasional mention is made that this state of affairs existed before the Revolution, nowhere, whether in St. John or in the later writers who date from the time of the occupation of the country by the United States Marine Corps, is there any realization that this condition antedates the independence of Haiti. The cleanliness of Africans in Africa wherever the natives have ready access to water has been well attested, and is still true in those regions from which the ancestors of the people of Haiti principally derive.

175 507 368 563 Yet some aspects of life in the towns livened the picture of Haitian colonial existence. Outstanding were the opportunities offered by these centers for social intercourse, and even for intellectual and artistic stimulation of a kind, such as was afforded by the famous *Cercle des Philadelphes* of Cap Française, dedicated to literary, philosophical, and, above all, to political discussions.[18] Masonic lodges, later taken over by the Negroes and today of appreciable importance in Haiti, were also instituted by the French, the first having been founded at the Cap in 1740.[19] Purely social meeting-places, such as public

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baths or public halls, were in operation, while in the towns of Cap Français, Port-au-Prince, Leogane, Saint-Marc, and Cayes, theaters were established which produced "the latest plays from Paris" and attracted large audiences.[20]

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Despite all this, the canker of homesickness constantly gnawed at the colonists even in the towns — the feeling that a stay in the colony was only for the interval needed to allow a man to escape to the mother country with a fortune. On the estates the loneliness and isolation of plantation life are commented upon repeatedly. A letter of the period, without place or date, found in the family papers of the historian de Vassière, discusses this with poignancy:

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"Have pity for an existence which must be eked out far from the world of our own people. We here number five whites, my father, my mother, my two brothers, and myself, surrounded by more than two hundred slaves, the number of our negroes who are domestics alone coming almost to thirty. From morning to night, wherever we turn, their faces meet our eyes. No matter how early we awaken, they are at our bedsides, and the custom which obtains here not to make the least move without the help of one of these Negro servants brings it about not only that we live in their society the greater portion of the day, but also that they are involved in the least important events of our daily life. Should we go outside our house to the workshops, we are still subject to this strange propinquity. Add to this the fact that our conversation has almost entirely to do with the health of our slaves, their needs which must be cared for, the manner in which they are to be distributed about the estate, or their attempts at revolt, and you will come to understand that our entire life is so closely identified with that of these unfortunates that, in the end, it is the same as theirs. And despite whatever pleasure may come from that almost ab-